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AND

"GOOD FOR NOTHING."

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Extract from the ain difficulties that are inseparable from the e ere are others that arise chiefly, if not solely, fr nged in proper order, and conveyed with due sim h difficulties necessarily result in a greater or le re candidates for dramatic honours; and not unf st without actual trial, o the profession of the s rected, have come to be reckoned among its chief ornaments.

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DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

A FARCE, IN ONE ACT.

BY MARK LEMON.

First Performed at the Royal Adelphi Theatre, Thursday, November 8th, 1849.

Dramatis Personæ.

[See page 4.

JOHN GRUMLEY	Mr. Wright.
SERGEANT TOM BROWN	Mr. C. J. Smith.
JOEY (Grumley's son)	Master Woodward
MRS. GRUMLEY	Mrs. F. Mathews.
MRS. SHACKLES	Miss E. Chaplin.
MRS. KNAGLEY	Miss Laws.
PEGGY BROWN	Miss Hunt.
POLLY	Miss Robbins.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Fifty Minutes.

COSTUME.

GRUMLEY.—Labourer's coat, breeches, and boots.
BROWN.—Sergeant's uniform ; one arm.
JOEY.—Corduroy suit.
MRS. GRUMLEY.—Plain cotton dress, apron, cap.
THE OTHER FEMALES.—The same, of different colours.

PROPERTIES.

Wash tub, hoe, bacon, quarter cake, Dutch oven, six plates, flat-iron, three teaspoons, three tea-cups and saucers, bowl, brown pitcher, part of pitcher broken, brandy balls in bottle, shirt in tub, rolling-pin, meat on plate, clock, coins, peg for coat, cup to break, small white table-cloth, rasher of bacon, rasher of bacon (black), six clothes-pegs, clothes-line across room, tea-kettle in fireplace, packet of black lead, flour in tub or tin, potatoes to peel, saucepan (large), bill on door, candles to sell, two herrings, fire-irons, bread and cheese, knife, fork, scales, tea-caddy containing tea and spoon, sugar, milk, slop-basin, small packet of tea, butter on counter, soap, flannel, towel, teacloth, comb, brush, paper for shop, pipe, tobacco, matches, hearthrug, treacle in pot, dough ready mixed in basin, desk, books, &c., in shop, bowl to wash in, soap and flannel, water.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*; L. U. E. *Left Upper Entrance*; R. U. E. *Right Upper Entrance*; L. S. E. *Left Second Entrance*; P. S. *Prompt Side*; O. P. *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R. R.C. C. LC. L.

*** *The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

THE SCENE *represents a Chandler's Shop,* R., *and a Room adjoining,* L.

MRS. GRUMLEY *discovered washing* JOEY, R. H. *side of the stage, in the room next the shop.*

Mrs. G. Stand still, Joey, do. There never was such a tiresome boy to be washed.

Joey. The soap's in my eye.

Mrs. G. The soap's in your eye? And serve you right, sir—you should stand still. There are many things in this life we should shut our eyes to, and soap is one of them. As if I hadn't enough to do in an ordinary way, what with the shop and the house—(*brushes Joey's hair*)—and one thing and another.

Shop-bell rings, and MRS. SHACKLES *enters.*

Mrs. G. (*Calls.*) Coming, di-rectly!

Mrs. S. (*In the shop, loudly.*) Oh, don't hurry, Mrs. Grumley, it's only Mrs. Shackles. Fine morning.

Mrs. G. Ve-ry, after the rain.

Mrs. S. Yes. Wind's rather high.

Mrs. G. Yes, it is high, and it's high time that something should be high, for everything's been very low latterly. (*To Joey.*) There now, keep yourself clean and tidy till dinner-time, and I'll give you a bull's-eye. (*She goes into shop.*) Now, ma'am, what can I do for you?

Mrs. S. A quarter o' pound of bacon, and streaky, if you please.

Mrs. G. You shall have it so, ma'am. (*Shows bacon.*) That's a lovely side, ma'am—ten and a half, and as you like it, ma'am—streaky as a tulip.

Mrs. S. Yes, ma'am, that seems all right.

Mrs. G. If I didn't know it was prime, you shouldn't have it. It's a bit of Mrs. Knagley's pig.

Mrs. S. (*Warmly*). There, don't, Mrs. G.—don't cut that for me. I couldn't swallow her bacon to save my own, if I was longing for it. Any other will do, ma'am—quarter of a pound, ma'am. Mrs. Knagley's? No—no, not if I knows it.

Mrs. G. Dear me! Why, I thought you were friends?

Mrs. S. Used to be, ma'am, I grant you—used to be; but when a woman offers to mangle small things at a penny a dozen less than the reg'lar price, she's no longer a friend of Sarah Shackles.

Mrs. G. I'm sure I'm very sorry to hear this.

Mrs. S. I'm sorry to say it, ma'am. Oh, the friend I've been to that woman! The pearlash and soap I've lent her nobody knows; and when she broke the rope of her mangle wasn't mine at her service? But do a good turn, even with a mangle, to anybody, and you make them your mortal enemy. It's the way of the world, ma'am.

Mrs. G. Ah, I'm afraid so. Twopence-three-farthings, ma'am.

Mrs. S. There's the money, ma'am. Never mind the change; I'll take a farden's worth of cakes, as it's my Billy's birthday, and I promised him a feast. Eight years old to-day, ma'am. Good morning, ma'am. Dear me, how the wind blows. (*As she goes out.*) How do you do, Mrs. Jones? Fine morning. Wind's rather high, &c.

[*Exit.*

Mrs. G. What a woman that is to talk, to be sure! Her tongue's like our dog's tail at dinner-time, it's always wagging.

(*Joey, during the above dialogue, has been trying to get the drawer out of the table, at last succeeds, and falls backward into a washing-tub, which is in front of the fireplace and the table.*)

Joey. Oh, mother, mother!

Mrs. G. (*Enters room.*) Why, what's the matter now? (*Pulls Joey out of tub, and boxes his ears.*) Why, you good-for nothing little monkey—right on the top of your father's Sunday shirt, besides wetting yourself to the skin. There, go to bed, do. (*Driving Joey upstairs,* R. H.) If your father was to see you, he'd storm the house down.

Joey. Ugh, ugh! I didn't go to do it. Ugh, ugh!

Mrs. G. There, go along. [*Exit Joey upstairs.*] (*Looking at clock.*) Dear me! five minutes to eight, and John's breakfast not ready. He'll be sure to be here at the hour, his appetite's like a prize chronometer, it never lises a second. (*Bustles about.*) He'll make such a row if everything's not ready for him. Good gracious! I've forgotten to put his bacon down. (*Runs into shop.*) John must

eat Mrs. Knagley's pig, though she has ruined the mangling.

(*She cuts rashers, returns into room, and puts bacon into Dutch-oven, which she places before the fire. Clock strikes eight.*

Enter JOHN GRUMLEY.—*He takes off his "Jerry hat" and outer coat, and places his hoe near the table.*

John. Now, Mary, breakfast ready?

Mrs. G. In a minute, John, I'll be ready.

John. In a minute! Why ain't you ready *now?*

Mrs. G. There, don't be cross. I've had so much to do.

John. Much to do! Well, that's a good 'un. You're like Banks's mare, that was too lazy to eat, and died 'cos they wouldn't feed her with a spoon.

Mrs. G. Oh, that's right—grumbling again! I don't think you could live without it. How you must like thunder. (*Shop bell rings.*) Coming! There, John, turn the bacon.

(*She enters shop, and serves customer*).

John. I sha'n't turn the bacon. There it is, fizzing away like the biler of a steam-engine. It's getting as black as a coal. There, now the fat's in the fire, and it's all in a blaze. I sha'n't put it out. Why wasn't it ready afore? It ain't my place to cook the bacon—my place is to eat it.

Mrs. G. (*re-enters, takes Dutch-oven from fire, and looks at bacon*) Why, John, the bacon's spoiled, I declare. (*Places it on a plate, quite black*).

John. I suppose it is—that ain't my fault; I ain't the fire, and I ain't the bacon, and I ain't Mrs. Grumley. (*Louder.*) I'm Mr. Grumley, come home to breakfast, after hoeing taters since six o'clock in the morning.

Mrs. G. It don't look nice, does it?

John. No, it don't. I ain't going to eat that, after working like a horse as I do. I ain't going to make my breakfast off bread and cinders. Who ever heard of *ashed* bacon? There, give us some tea.

Mrs. G. Good gracious—if you haven't flurried me so that I've forgot to make it.

(*Prepares tea hurriedly, takes teapot and makes tea; kettle from fire-place, &c.,*)

John. Ugh! Now I've got to wait for that till it draws, and a precious long time that'll be. Dang me if I ain't a mind to go down to the "Red Lion," and have a gallon of ale for breakfast. (*Rising.*) I will, too.

(*Goes into shop—she brings him back*).

Mrs. G. (*pushing him back into a chair*) Now, John, don't be so unkind, don't. It will be ready in a minute. (*Pouring out a cup of tea.*)

John. That won't make a chap nervous. If it wasn't for the look of the thing, I'd as soon drink water. (*Drinks and coughs*) Ugh, ugh! You call this tea? I wonder you ain't ashamed to look a teapot in the face. It's nothing but birch-broom, and here's a bit big enough to make a cribbage peg.

Mrs. G. La, John, how disagreeable you are this morning!

John. Disagreeable? Well, I like that.

Mrs. G. I know you do.

John. When a chap's been hoeing taters, and comes in to have his wittels, and finds none ready, of course he's likely to be agreeable. A man ain't a balloon, Mrs. Grumley. He requires to be filled with something besides nothing. I don't know what you do with your time for my part.

Mrs. G. I don't think you do.

John. Nothing, as I can see.

Mrs. G. Why, I'm a perfect slave, I am. If I were a regular Ethiopian, I couldn't be wearing out my bones faster.

John. You! What do you do, I should like to know?

Mrs. G. When I get up, I light the fire——

John. Well, you couldn't do that lying in bed. What next?

Mrs. G. Open the shop, sweep up the house, and clean the doorstep——

John. What is there to boast of in opening the shop, that you are so proud of it, and so go on? You're like the shutters, and want taking down a peg.

Mrs. G. Make the beds, wash Joey, and comb his hair——

John. Comb his hair? That's nothing to *hoeing* taters.

Mrs. G. Get the breakfast——

John. Not always.

Mrs. G. Mind the shop, and serve the customers.

John. Serve the customers indeed! And how do you serve me? If you give them as short weight as you give me short commons, we must be making a rapid fortune. And that's all you'll do to-day?

Mrs. G. No it is not, Mr. Grumley. I've washing to do, pudding to make, taters to peel, and——

John. That's nothing to hoeing on 'em.

Mrs. G. Grate to clean, hearth to scrub——

John. Hearth to scrub? Why, I'd do all your work in an hour, any day in the week.

Mrs. G. You would—you would, John Grumley? Then do it, John Grumley, do it!

John. And so I will, and you shall hoe the taters.

Mrs. G. And I'll do it, I'll do it, John Grumley, I'll do it! You shall do my work, and I'll do yours. (*Puts on hat and coat.*) I can stand this no longer. I can hoe the taters as well as you, I'll be sworn. Now, John Grumley.

John. And now, Mary Grumley. I can make a pudding as well as you, I'll be sworn. I wasn't in the Militia three years for nothing.

Mrs. G. Then do it to-day, John; and I wish you joy on your job, John.

[*Exit through door into shop.*

John. I say, what are you going to hoe the taters with?

(*Mrs. Grumley returns for the hoe.*)

Mrs. G. Oh, I had forgot that.

[*Exit,* L.

John. (*Calling after her.*) I say, dinner ready at twelve o'clock; if you ain't back in time, I shall begin without you.—No, she won't frighten me. A man who has served three weeks' campaign on Wormwood Scrubbs can turn his hand to anything. What shall I do first? I may as well wash up the tea-things. (*Takes the tea-kettle, pours out hot water, puts cup into the bowl, and scalds his fingers—drops the cup.*) Mrs. Grumley mustn't know of this, for every piece will provoke a row.

JOEY *appears at the top of the stairs.*

—I'll say Joey did it.

Joey. Then mother won't give me any more bread and treacle. Oh, oh, ho!

John. Hallo! I thought you were in school. Why ain't you in school?

Joey. Because I've been in the wash-tub.

John. What do you mean? Come down—come down directly! (*Joey descends—he wears a pair of his father's kneebreeches.*) Why, those are my Sunday smalls. By the law of Nature you may tread in your father's shoes, but you have no right to get into your father's what's-'em-names. But since you're at home, make yourself useful. But fetch me a pitcher of water. (*Joey takes brown pitcher, and exit through shop.*) I may as well go on with the wash. (*Places washing-tub on chair, and begins to wash. Shop bell rings.*) Coming.

(*Goes into shop.*)

Enter a LITTLE GIRL *at shop door.*

—What for you, my dear?

Girl. A red herring, if you please, sir.

John. Soft roe or hard one? Oh, you don't mind which, eh? There's a prime one, just come up from Yarmouth by the railway—only three weeks coming by the Eastern Counties—three-ha'pence. Good morning. (*Exit Girl. Returns to room,* R. H.) Hallo! (*Calling.*) This isn't a penny, this is a dump. Hi, hi! I expect there's a loss on this transaction—— (*A crash at shop door.*) What's that? Why, if Joey hasn't broke the pitcher!

Enter JOEY *with a broken pitcher.*

Joey. Oh, father, the pig run between my legs, and here's the jug!

(*Shows handle and neck of pitcher*).

John. You're a going it—neck or nothing But if you'll own to the teacup, I'll give you a ha'penny!

Joey. Give me the ha'penny, father; mother's sure to thump my head for the pitcher!

John. Thump his head—so much for capital punishment! As he's sure of the worst, he don't mind the amount of his transgressions. (*Begins to wash.*) It's a great thing to be able to turn your hand to anything. (*Bell rings*).

Enter LITTLE GIRL, *shop door.*

—Coming! (*Dries his hands.*)

Joey. Father, Peggy Brown wants two-pen'orth of brandy balls.

John. That's a wholesale order. (*Enters shop and takes brandy balls from tin box*). Two-pen'orth, Peggy? There, and take care the brandy don't get into your head. (*Counts out brandy balls, receives the money*). No more dumps, I hope!

Peggy. Oh, thankee, Mr. Grumley, thankee! How very good-natured of you, to be sure. Thankee, sir!

[*Exit.*

GRUMLEY *and* JOEY *re-enter the room.*

Joey. (*Laughing.*) Ha, ha, ha!

John. What are you laughing at? Good-natured?—what for?

Joey. 'Cos brandy balls is four a penny, and you give her six! Ha, ha, ha!

John. (*Boxes Joey.*) Then why didn't you say so? Do you wish to see your parent a bankrupt, with his certificate refused for reckless trading? (*Goes to the tub.*) I hope Mrs. Grumley is getting on better with the taters. (*Wrings out the shirt and hangs it up at the fireplace on a line.*) Talking of taters puts me in mind of the pudding. (*Goes to the cupboard and places rolling-pin, meat on a plate, basin, &c., and begins to make a pudding*). Few things better than a beefsteak pudding. Oh, here's the dough all ready. Mrs. Grumley always makes it over night, as she has it ready for the morning. She says it makes it lighter. Joey, you put the saucepan on the fire. (*Kneads the dough, rolls it, takes basin, and makes the pudding.*) I wonder who discovered a pudding. It must have been Captain Cook, when he found out the Sandwich Islands. (*Puts meat, pepper, salt, a little water into basin, peels one or two potatoes, and puts them on the top*) Potatoes, too! Aye, they're a real blessing to parents, for children's appetites are like the Income Tax—there's no end to 'em.

(*Bell rings.*)

Enter MRS. KNAGLEY.

(*Goes into shop*) Good morning, Mrs. Knagley. What for you, ma'am?

Mrs. K. Bless me, are you shopkeeper to-day?

John. Yes, ma'am—Mrs. Grumley's gone out to look after what she hoes!

Mrs. K. Going out will do her good, she sticks close enough at home in a general way!

John. Yes, ma'am, we are in a *general way.* So what do you want, ma'am?

Mrs. K. An ounce of black tea.

(*John serves her with small paper parcel.*)

Mrs. K. Why, that's not tea, Mr. Grumley!

John. No, it's not; it's black lead! Oh, here's the tea done up in cartridge paper—to make it look like gunpowder, I suppose!

Mrs. K. If it's gunpowder, Mr. Grumley, it don't seem to go off!

John. Well, ma'am, that's no affair of yourn, so you can go, ma'am! I say, don't you pay for that?

Mrs. K. No, put it down to me. Good morning, Mr. Grumley!

[*Exit out of shop.*

John. Very well, ma'am; you gets no more arter Saturday. (*Re-enters room.*) That's a bore! (*Bell rings.*) Coming! What do you want?

Enter LITTLE GIRL.

Girl. Please to give me change for sixpence?

John. Can't; haven't got so much in the house! [*Exit Girl.*] Nothing to be got out of that! Why, dang it! the fire's out, and it only wants a quarter to eleven! (*Joey, as he stands on the chair, pulls the flour tub all over him from the top of the cupboard.*) Why, what's the boy arter now? (*Picks him up and brings him down.*) Here's a sight for a father! A walking cauliflower! Where's the rolling-pin? I'll dust your jacket for you!

Joey. (*Runs up the stairs.*) Oh, don't ye, father—don't ye!

[*Exit.*

John. I fancy Mary's berth is not a bed of roses,

after all. (*Shop bell.—He is going to the door, but stops.*) No; I'm danged if I do!

(*Takes his pipe at fireplace,* R. H., *and sits.*)

Enter MRS. KNAGLEY *at shop door,* L. H., *at the same time* MRS. SHACKLES.—*They enter room.*

Mrs. S. I'm surprised at you, Mrs. Knagley!

Mrs. K. I'm surprised at you, ma'am.

Mrs. S. But after your conduct about the mangling—but, however, no matter.

Mrs. K. The gentleman at the "Red Lion"——

Mrs. S. Asking me to call on Mrs Grumley.

Mrs. K. I deny it, ma'am. "Ma'am," says the gent——

Mrs. S. Addressing me.

Mrs. K. No, mem—me!

Mrs. S. You!—No, mem—*me!*) You was at the bar, drinking gin and peppermint!

Mrs. K. That's false, mem! Prove it, mem—prove it!

Mrs. S. Your present excited state would be proof enough for any unprejudiced jury, mem.

Mrs. K. Say that again, mem, and I'll throw a pound of butter at you! (*Going into shop.*)

John. (*Coming forward.*) Hollo! Stop—stop! I can't stand that!

Mrs. S. Mr. Grumley, I beg to apologize for Mrs. Knagley.

Mrs. K. Don't apologize for me, mem, I beg.

John. Dang me, if I don't think both on you have been drinking gin and peppermint!

Mrs. K. The fact is, Mr. Grumley——

Mrs. S. There's a gent—a milingtary gent——

Mrs. K. At the "Red Lion," drinking red port wine——

Mrs. S. Asking after Mary Brown—Mrs. G.'s maiden name, I believe?

John. Brown was her name, mem.

Mrs. S. You see, Mrs. Knagley——

Mrs. K. And said he should be glad——

Mrs. S. and Mrs. K. together. And said he should be glad if you'd step down to the "Red Lion" and drink some red port wine with him. There—there, mem!

John. A stranger drinking red port wine a-asking arter me? I can't leave the shop, and I won't send for Mary. Tell him, if you please, that I should be glad to see him here. We have some good table beer on tap, and if he don't like that he can bring a bottle of red port with him, and I can borrow a corkscrew.

Mrs. S. and Mrs K. Very well, Mr. Grumley.

(*As they go out both stop at the door.*

Mrs. K. Mrs. Shackles——

Mrs. S. Mrs. Knagley——

Mrs. K. Follow your betters, ma'am!

[*Exit at shop door.*

Mrs. S. My betters, ma'am! They're not in your shoes, ma'am!

[*Exit.*

John. Who can this be? Somebody wants me—a drinking red port wine. I don't know anybody as drinks red port wine. I wish Mrs. Grumley would stop at home and mind her own business. (*A voice without, at the window,* R. 2 E., "Mr. Grumley!" *He goes to the window.*) Mrs. Tufish, my next door neighbour. What does she want, I wonder?

Voice. Oh, Mr. Grumley! here's your pig has got into my garden.

John. Oh, you old brute!

Voice. Ah, ah!

John. No, not you, ma'am—the pig. I'll fetch her out directly.

[*Takes the poker, and exits at the shop door.*

Enter MRS. GRUMLEY *and* SERGEANT TOM BROWN.

Mrs. G. Now, my dear Tom, do be quiet, do, pray.

Tom. I shall not, Mary—I shall speak my mind. (*Calling.*) Here, you Mr. Grumley.

Mrs. G. Now do be quiet, Tom. Why, where is John? Out—oh, that's lucky.

Tom. Where is he? I'll not let any man make a beast of burden of my sister. Here I comes home, after ten years' absence in India, and fin is you, my darling little Betsy—that I love better than drinking and fighting—here I comes home, and I finds you a hoeing taters, whilst your lout of a husband is snug in quarters. Why I——

Mrs. G. Now do be quiet. He is one of the best husbands that ever lived; only he grumbles a little, now and then—out he loves me dearly.

Tom. Don't tell me. No man as loves his wife makes her *unfeminine* herself that way.

(*Points to her Jerry coat and hat*).

Mrs. G. Why, they tell me this is all the fashion with the London ladies, now a-days. But my dear Tom, it's all my own fault; we had a little tiff this morning. But stay, Tom, a thought strikes me; it will be a good bit of fun, and help to convince you what a good husband mine is.

Tom. Well, what is it?

Mrs. G. You shall see. Here, step into the yard—(*door,* C.)—John will be here in a minute. There he is—coming towards the window. Away with you!

[*Exit Tom,* C. *door.*

Mrs. G. (*Looking about and laughing.*) Good gracious! what a mess the place is in, to be sure. Ha, ha, ha! The fire's out, and the pudding's never been put into the pot. What a capital maid-of-all-work you are, Johnny! Here he comes!

Enter JOHN, *shop door,* L. H., *and to the back room,* R.H.

John. Dang that old brute! I've had a pretty hunt to get her out of the garden. (*Seeing Mrs. G.*) Hallo, missis!

Mrs. G. (*Seated in chair at the table,* R.H.) Lunch time, Johnny—just come in for a snack. Come, lad, where's the bread and cheese? And, come, a sup of beer.

John. Oh, I'm to get them, am I?

Mrs. G. Of course. I always got them when I was in your situation.

John. That's true.

(*Goes to cupboard for bread and cheese.*)

Mrs. G. Now, don't dawdle, Johnny. Come, a knife—come! for I want to get to work again. Bread—cheese—that's right! Now, lad—come, bustle, bustle, lad. (*Imitating John's tone and manner.*) Why, I do as much in an hour as you do in a day.

John. So I would—so I will. Don't come any of your bounce over me! You're a nice one, you are! (*Goes into shop for beer and returns.*)

Mrs. G. What, grumbling again, John? Well,

unpleasant things do turn up for the best sometimes. I thought I couldn't have the heart to tell you; but now that I see how easily you take it, I won't hesitate.

John. Take what easily?

Mrs. G. I daresay there are a great many better wives than I am; I know it, and hope, John, in your next venture you may have the good luck to find one.

John. My next venture! What do you mean? It ain't my good luck to be rid of you yet.

Mrs. G. Yes it is, John—or Mr. Grumley, I shou'd say.

John. What's the woman talking about? You're not used to beer in the morning, and it's got into your head.

Mrs. G. No, it's not, John; but circumstances have occurred of a most wonderful nature, that will be as good as Doctors' Commons to us.

John. Don't talk of such horrible things as Doctors' Commons. What do you mean?

Mrs. G. When we met first, John, you know we were fellow-servants at Mr. Mountjolly's.

John. Yes, I know we was. You was the cook, and I was the gardener. You cooked the goose and I found the stuffing.

Mrs. G. You know, John, you never told me till a very long time after that we were married that you had been a soger—did you, John?

John. No, I didn't, 'cos you always said you never would marry a soger.

Mrs. G. No more I never would, John, and for one very particular reason. Now, John, you had your secret, John, and I had mine.

John. Why, what's a-coming? Nothing under the Police Act, I hope.

Mrs. G. No, John, I hope not, too.

John. Hope not! My hair's getting like a paper of pins. Well, what is it?

Mrs. G. Why, John, as I have heard you say a hundred times that you'd never marry a widow, John, I never told you I'd been married before.

John. Oh, don't say as you was married afore! Don't tell me so now! Don't say as you ever loved another! Don't say your heart was a second-hand one!

Mrs. G. It's not that, John; it's because I've come to be his property again, John.

John Who's his? What's his? Where is his?

Mrs. G. John, I thought he was dead. He was a soldier, and his name was Tom Brown. We read in the newspaper that a Tom Brown was dead—killed in battle—and we all agreed that it was my Tom Brown, and that I was a widow—and—and—so I married you, John.

John. Mary, you've been a good little 'oman to me though you was a widow. (*Whimpering.*)

Mrs. G. But I ain't a widow, John.

John. Why, you must be somebody's wife, or somebody's widow.

Mrs. G. I am somebody's wife, John. Tom Brown *wasn't killed!* And he's come back to claim me, and he's now down at the "Red Lion."

John. (*Seizing rolling-pin from table.*) He'd better have been in the Red Sea!

Mrs. G. Why, John, hasn't he come to take a bad bargain off your hands?

John. Bad bargain! There never was such a piece of goods as you are! Don't own him; tell him he's out of the statue of limitations.

Enter TOM BROWN, C. *door.*

Mrs. G. What! you do love me, then, John?

John. Why, to be sure I do. Does not this look like it, Mary Grumley?

Mrs. G. Not Grumley now, John, but Brown, John.

John. *No*—Grumley! Grumley! Brown—never! Let him take all I have—tea, coffee, tobacco, snuff—take all, so that he leaves me my little 'oman! I hoped we should have enjoyed together a green old age, but how can we do that, if you're *Brown* after all?

(*Embraces and kisses Mrs. Grumley.*)

Tom. (*Coming down.*) Hurrah, hurrah! Kiss her again. Kiss her again, and let me see you do it!

John. Who—a—are you?

Tom. Tom Brown, of the 197th, as Mary, my darling, here can testify.

John. 197! Is there any more on yer? I tell you what it is, Tom Brown, arms is not my profession *now*, but, before I'll part with that little 'oman, I'll die upon the spot! So come on, Tom Brown.

Mrs. G No, no: this is brother Tom, of whom we have talked a hundred times. He saw me at work in the garden, and though I told him it was all my own fault, he thought you did not care for me; and I have played you this little trick to convince him that, with all my faults, you do love me dearly. You forgive me, John?

John. Forgive you! To be be sure I will. To know that you ain't married — I mean, to know that you ain't married to nobody else but me. I say, Tom Brown, you won't mind the rolling-pin—you'll excuse it?

(*Shakes hands with rolling-pin.*)

Tom. To be sure, brother John.

Mrs. G. But where's Joey? Brother Tom hasn't seen our Joey. We have got a Joey. Joey!

JOEY *appears at the top of the stairs,* R.H.

Joey. Yes, mother.

Mrs. G. (*Screams.*) Oh! what's the matter?

John. Oh, nothing, my dear; he has only made himself — what you always said he would be — the flower of the family.

Mrs. G. Dear me, how he frightened me! But come, sir, there's your uncle, Joey—go and embrace your uncle.

(*Tom embraces Joey, and of course is covered with flour.*)

Mrs. G. Dear, dear, what a happy day this will be! But come, John, it's time now for dinner.

John. Come, let's all sit down. (*All go up to the table, and Grumley sees the pudding still there.*) Egad! I've forgot to put the pudding into the pot.

(*Mrs. Grumley and all laugh.*)

Mrs. G. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, John, you are a capital maid-of-all-work!

John. Ha, ha! I say, Mary, the fire's out, and so is the pudding. I've been very wrong; but henceforth I'll mind my own business. I've a rough outside; but, la bless you, I've a warm heart within. As for us husbands, you'd find us capital chaps—provided we have everything all our own way; and if you women warn't quite so frumpish there would be a much better state of "Domestic Economy."

CURTAIN.

GOOD FOR NOTHING.

A COMIC DRAMA, IN ONE ACT.

BY JOHN B. BUCKSTONE.

First Performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, on Tuesday, February 4th, 1851.

Dramatis Personæ.

[See p. 12.

TOM DIBBLES	(A Gardener)	Mr. Buckstone.
HARRY COLLIER	(A Railway Fireman)	Mr. Howe.
CHARLEY	(A Carpenter)	Mr. Parselle.
YOUNG MR. SIMPSON		Mr. Clark.
SERVANT		Mr. Ellis.
NAN		Mrs. Fitzwilliam.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—Fifty Minutes.

SCENE.—*A room in a cottage at Windsor.—A door in the centre, opening into the street; on* R. H. *of door a window; on* L. H. *of door a bench, on which is a jug of water, a brown wash-hand basin, and a large lump of yellow soap.—Over the back of a wooden chair hangs a rough towel; a shoe-brush and a comb in the chair.—Over the bench at the back is a little broken looking-glass.—A door* L. H. 3 E.—*A fireplace* L. H. 2 E., *with fender, fire-irons, &c.—On the wall,* L. H. 3 E., *a little bookshelf with a few books on it.—A cupboard,* R. H. 2 E.—*A common table, with a drawer in it, near the centre of the stage; wooden chairs and a stool, and other articles of humble furniture.*

YOUNG MR. SIMPSON *opens the door in* C., *and looks in.*

Simp. As usual! nobody in the way (*Advances, and knocks on the table.*) Anybody at home? Of course not! The house left to take care of itself, as it always is, while that precious daughter, as they call her, of my father's two tenants, who rent this house, is playing in the streets. These people must be got rid of. They're by no means respectable, and as for the furniture, nothing can be more disreputable! What rubbish! the tables and chairs all notched and cut—plates and dishes, too, all cracked. My father will be lucky if he finds enough on the premises to cover the arrears of rent.

CHARLEY *appears at the door, a carpenter's basket with tools, &c., on his shoulders.*

Char. Tom or Harry at home?

Simp. At home? No! I came here with a message from my father, the landlord, and I can't find anyone to give it to.

Char. (L.) Give it to me; one of them is sure to be in presently, and as I mean to wait a bit, I can tell 'em for you.

Simp. (R.) Then please to inform them that my father sent me for the half-year's rent overdue, and if it's not forthcoming in one hour from this time they must take the consequences.

Char. They'll pay, don't be afraid.

Simp. Whether they do or not we want to get rid of them, as we don't intend for the future to let our house to any but respectable people.

Char. They're honest and hardworking!

Simp. That's not respectability!

Char. What is?

Simp. People that are punctual in their payments and are never seen in an alehouse. Besides, there's that girl they have adopted! The neighbours all say she's quite a nuisance—knocking at doors and running away, throwing stones—I received such a thump on the head the other day from one that I didn't know what I was about for a week—breaking windows, and continually playing with all the boys in the parish! Respectable people don't like it. Good morning! It's now twelve o'clock—I shall be here again in an hour for the rent, and must have it. Give my compliments to your sister! (*Exit,* D F.

Char. He's quite right about Nan, and it's really a great pity she's so neglected. I'm sure she has a good heart, and with a little care might be made a very nice girl. But Tom and Harry are always squabbling about her. One wants her to be this, the other that—one won't have her corrected, the other says she ought to be; meantime, she is left to run about as wild as a colt, is taught nothing, while her manners and her language are neither those of a girl or a boy. I think it's time somebody ought to speak seriously to them about her, and as I'm a friend of all parties, hang me if I don't! (*Crosses to* R.

Enter HARRY, D. F., *down* L.

Harry. Ah, Charley! you here? I've just run my two expresses, and have come home to dinner. Where's Nan?

Char. About the streets, as usual.

Harry. Ah! I wish I could have *my* way—I'd make a very different girl of her. But whatever I propose, Tom objects to, and we get to words, and though he's a little fellow, he's sometimes so violent that I give in for a quiet life, yet, if I liked, I could soon shut up *his* steam.

Char. I know you both mean well, and adopted her from the best motives.

Harry (*Violently.*) But I tell you she's getting very troublesome, and has quite the upper hand of both of us.

Char. You needn't go into a passion with me.

Harry. I like to speak my mind right out at once, even if I check my speed afterwards. Now Tom always begins as cool as a cucumber, saying he's not going into a passion, and all the while he keeps poking his fire, and heaping on coals, till he makes such a blaze—and having no safety valve, burst goes the boiler and over goes the train.

Char. Tom asked me to pick a bit with you today, and after I've been on a little business I shall come back and have a talk with you about the girl.

Harry. I wish you would, and get something settled—she's very fond of us I know, though now and then I think she likes Tom best, and that makes me savage; but when I think of her poor grandfather, I feel as if I could put up with anything. You didn't know him, poor fellow! He was a waterman here, and Nan being without father or mother, he was her only relation. One day at a regatta, we were all in a boat together, and through some stupidity of mine or Tom's, I don't know which, the boat upset and the poor old man was drowned, and so we took Nan to bring up and take care of between us.

(*Tom heard without, calling to Nan.*)

Tom. (*Without.*) Come down that ladder directly—come down, I say—come down!

Harry. There she is again, at some mischief or other.

Enter TOM, D. F., *a large cabbage in his hand—comes down* C.

Tom. Now I don't want to put myself or any body else out of the way, and for the future I don't mean to get angry about anything, because it's not my nature, and it makes me ill! but I must observe, and I do so quietly and calmly, if *something*, I don't care what, is not settled this very day about that girl—if something is not done to keep her out of mischief, and to teach her to earn her livelihood—I'm not going into a passion—no! but if we don't come to some agreement, as sure as I dash this cabbage on the ground, I'll smash everything in the house to shivers.

Harry. (*Violently.*) It's *all* your fault, it is. You never will correct her, you let her do whatever she likes, and when you take her to task, and she quietly tells you the truth of things, instead of speaking properly, you laugh at her, she of course thinks there can be no harm in her tricks, and goes on again worse than ever. Now is that right, Charley?

Tom. I'm glad, Harry, that you have the good sense to talk quietly on the subject, because people can never be determined—never can come to any understanding of anything unless they're perfectly cool, and by jingo——

Char. (*Crosses to* C., *interrupting.*) Now stop a moment, we'll talk this all over after dinner; in the meantime I've got a message for you. Your landlord's son has been here, he says the half-year's rent must be paid to-day, or you'll both be in trouble.

Tom. I don't know what we are to do; all that I had got towards it I lent to a poor woman, a fortnight ago, who was in great distress; she said she would be sure to pay me as yesterday, and when I called to-day, I found her worse off than ever. It's always the way.

Harry. (L.) I've made a precious fool of *myself*. I became security for one of th fellows on our line; he went off to Scotland, and if I had not paid half of it a month ago, I should have been locked up and have had all my hair cut off; and I don't know now what they'll do to me if I don't get five pounds to pay the rest to-day.

Char. (C.) You're in a pretty plight, then; and I'm sorry to say I can't help you, for I parted with all my ready money last Saturday to pay for the things I've bought in setting my sister up in business.

Harry. Suppose we take the money we've saved up towards putting Nan 'prentice to something—we've been a long time adding to it. I daresay there's six or seven pounds in the box, and we'd soon make it up again.

Tom. (*Crossing to* C.) Now listen to me quietly—we've both stinted ourselves often to keep our promise to put by a little every week to place Nan out in the world—through a great many temptations we've never touched that little hoard; it's all very well to say we'll soon make it up again, but we never do. We may *think* to do it, but it's all bubble and squeak, it can't be done, and I say calmly and in the softest tone of voice possible, if one penny of that money is touched but for what it was meant for, I'll kick him that does it over the bridge and back again, and all round the town, as I'd kick this cabbage!

(*Kicks the cabbage about the stage, and throws himself into a chair.*)

Harry. Well, then, settle what she's to be at once, and get rid of the money!

Tom. That's what I want. Now let us talk over the matter calmly, because letting her go on from week to week in this way won't do!

Harry. Of course it won't, especially spoiling her as you do.

Tom. I don't spoil her—it's *you!*

Harry. Oh, that's very good! Didn't she come home the other day wet through and through? And though she wouldn't say how she came so, she had tumbled into the river, I'm sure of it!

Tom. Well, now, don't rake up that again! If she *did* fall in the river, what o' that? People *do* fall in rivers sometimes! But what the deuce—I thought we were to settle what she's to *be*!

Harry. Then go on!

Tom. Very well; I've been speaking to a very respectable laundress about her!

Harry. She sha'n't be a laundress!

Tom. Well, I'll argue the matter quietly—what the deuce would you have her?

Harry. (*Loudly*) Something genteel and clean—the superintendent of a first-class refreshment-room on one of the great lines!

Tom. Nonsense! that won't suit her! To be laced and titivated, and wrap up tarts in whitey-brown paper, and hand boiling-hot soup and scalding tea to hungry passengers, with a minute and a half to swallow 'em in, won't do!

Char. How can you settle on what she's to be when you haven't yet taught her to read!

Harry. I have often told Tom so!

Tom. I'm sure she's been sent to two or three old women, but she didn't take to it, and it seemed to worry her. It's no use forcing learning; you can't knock it into people's heads I never could knock it into mine, I know, and I don't think I'm much the worse for it, am I?

Loud shouts heard without, and cries of "Give it him! That's right!"—MR. SIMPSON *heard calling out,* "Be quiet! Police! police!" *He appears at the door covered with mud, his hat broken, and knocked over his eyes and a dab of mud on his face.*

Simp. Here's a state I'm in! Look at me! look at me!

Tom. What's the matter?

Harry. Who's done this?

Simp. Who's done it? Can you ask such a question? Why, your precious daughter, as you call her, and I demand her immediate punishment. It's infamous! shameful!

Tom, Where is she?

Simp. Outside the door! (*Crosses to* R. H.)

Tom. (*Calling.*) Nan!

Harry. Come in! Come in directly!

NAN *enters* D.F., *with her pinafore all awry, a head of hair cut like a boy's, laced-up boots, and her frock torn in several places. She advances sheepishly, and with apprehension, down the centre.*

Tom. Come here! It's now high time there should be something settled with *you;* there must be an end to all this—and, though I mean only to talk in a gentle manner to you, you mustn't think I'm not angry, because I *am*, and for the future it's fit you should know, the more gently I speak the more I mean what I say—so now I ask you calmly, what *the* devil have you been doing?

Nan. It was all *his* fault!

(*Pointing to Simpson.*)

Simp. How dare you say so? How dare——

Tom. Mr. Simpson, leave her to me and Harry; we are the proper persons to talk to her, and it's only by mildness——

Simp. But allow me——

Tom. (*Loudly.*) Hold your tongue!

Harry. No, let him speak—let him make his complaint; how can we learn who's right and who's wrong, if we don't hear both sides?

Tom. (*To Simpson.*) Go on, then.

Simp. I was coming along very quietly, with another message to you from my father, and was only thinking of what I had to say, when I suddenly found my toes jumped upon, my person knocked this way and that, and my hat driven over my eyes with great violence. I tried to escape, but it was no use—the faster I ran the faster I was followed, while the shower of stones that rattled about me was positively alarming. But if you doubt what I say, look at me!

Tom. And Nan did all this?

Simp. With the aid of her companions.

Tom. And what have you to say to this? Now I speak to you as if I was *really* your father. (*Loudly.*) What have you to say?

Harry. Don't frighten the girl—let's hear her story, and then see what's to be done. Now, Nan, don't be afraid—speak, only mind you tell truth.

Char. She won't tell anything else, take *my* word for that.

Nan. (*In a low tone.*) I was only playing.

Tom. Louder! speak louder!

Nan. I was only playing at hop-scotch with Billy Purvis, next door, and the doctor's boy, and the young gentleman at the coal-shed. It was my turn to pitch the nicker, and I did, and I kick'd it all through to the last base, without even stopping on a line or going out at the corners, and I was getting so tired, for you must do it all on one leg you know, 'cause if you come down on t'other leg you're out.

Tom. Yes, I recollect when I was a boy——

Harry (*Interested.*) So do I. Go on, Nan.

Nan. Well, just as I was winning the game, and no cheating, and was hopping with the nicker on my toe so—— (*Hopping.*)

Tom. Ah, yes, I know.

Harry. Well?

Nan. Who should come by, but young Mr. Simpson. I suppose he couldn't see where he was going, for he push'd up against me, and made me lose the game, and just as I was winning—nobody likes *that*, you know—so I gave *him* a push, and he fell against Billy, then Billy pushed him against the young gentleman at the coal-shed, then he got push'd from one to the other, till we all had such a capital game with him at "none o' *my* child"—then he got savage, and that's just what we wanted; and then he hit next door, and next door hit him again; then we made a ring to see fair play, but young Mister Simpson turned cowardy custard, and something was thrown at him, then he run away, and we all run after him, and pelted him, and, *then* the more we pelted the more we wanted to, and then he run in here, and here he is—and oh! it was *such* fun.

Tom. (*Laughing.*) Ha, ha! lord, how I wish I'd been among 'em.

Harry. Ha, ha! So do I; I'd ha' given anything——

Nan. Oh! don't I wish you had; he'd ha' been served out ten times worse.

Tom. Ha, ha, ha! capital!

Harry. Fine! ha, ha!

Nan. Wasn't it? ha, ha, ha!

Char. (*Shaking his head.*) And this is what you call correcting her, is it?

Tom. Oh, ah! (*To Nan.*) Now you must know that all this was very wrong, and—(*smothering a laugh*)—I'm very angry—and—and—— Upon my soul I can't say anything to her!

Simp. I thought as much. However, I shall take another course, and I must say, I consider you a vulgar set of people altogether, and the sooner the parish is rid of such rubbish the better.

Tom. (*Crossing to Simpson.*) Now, I'm going to talk to you like a father, and give you a little gentle advice. When a person comes to make a complaint, or ask a favour, he should keep a civil tongue in his head, for being sarcy is not the way to get what he wants. Now, I intend to speak very mildly. You told *your* tale, then we heard the other, and meant to do you justice; but when you come to talk about vulgar people, and ridding the parish of rubbish, I can only say you're a miserable, half-starved, two-forked parsnip, and if you don't instantly get out of this house, I'll kick you out.

Simp. (*Crosses to* C. *and retreating to the door.*) You shall hear from me again.

Tom. Get out! (*Kicking at him.*) Get out!

(*Comes down* R.C.)

Simp. (*Going out at the door.*) You shall hear from me very soon.

Nan. (*Running to the door and calling after him.*) Tell tale tit! when will you call again? Ha, ha! (*Coming down.*) He hasn't got much by coming here.

Tom. I didn't lose my temper then, did I? No, when you want a person to understand what you mean, there's nothing like keeping cool, a little priggish, confounded—— (*To Nan, who is on the* L. H., *winding up a top.*) I must have some talk with you another time. Now I'll go and see about getting this rent together. I think I know two or three good fellows that will lend me a helping hand, and I can't expect much mercy from the landlord *now*. You'll have your bit o' dinner with us, Charley, at any rate, and Harry, if I can get something to help you, I will! (*At the door and speaking to Nan.*) Now none of your tricks while I'm gone, because I won't have it.

[*Exit Tom,* D.F., *and* L. H.

Harry. I'll go and see what I can do, for we are both in a terrible scrape; and if I can't get five pounds between this and three o'clock I don't think I shall be driving my engine to-morrow. Sha'n't be gone long, Charley. Mind you keep indoors, miss.

[*Exit Harry,* D.F., *and* R.H.

Char. (*Crosses to her*). Well, Nan, I don't wish to talk unkindly to you, because it's not altogether your fault that you're so wild, and unlike what a young woman ought to be. Your two fathers are more to blame than you are.

Nan. You had better not speak against my fathers; for when I hear anything of them I don't like, my fingers double up as tight as a ball, and I feel as if I could knock anyone down; and I shouldn't like to feel so to *you*—so you'd better be quiet.

Char. I like you for that, Nan. I like to see everybody stand up for those who belong to them, or have been kind to them—right or wrong.

Nan. So do I, and I always *will*, too.

Char. It's a great pity a girl of your spirit is not made to be useful.

Nan. I *am* useful sometimes. I often fetch the beer, and take a good drink on the way for my trouble; and when I'm sent for a loaf you should only see how I pick it all round. Oh, I do love to pick a loaf! It seems always much nicer than having a good slice.

Char. It's very wrong to do it, I can tell you.

Nan. Is it? I don't think so.

Char. No, because you're never properly corrected.

Nan. Oh, stuff! I hate people always saying to me you mustn't do this and you mustn't do that; I like to do just as I please. I know the more I'm told *not* to do a thing, the more I feel the want to do it, and I'm never easy till it's done, either.

Char. Ah, Nan, I wish I had the charge of you.

Nan. Lord! do you, Charley?

Char. I think I could improve you, and in time, make you fit to be some honest fellow's wife. Now, there's a young woman that I admire *very* much—she's not handsome, but she takes a pride in herself as a girl ought.

Nan. (*Staring at Charley.*) What does she do?

Char. In the first place, she's always tidy and fit to be seen.

Nan. Oh! and you don't think I *am?*

Char. Not exactly.

Nan. What more is she?

Char. She hasn't a very fine head of hair, but by often properly combing and brushing it, she manages to make it look very nice.

Nan. I only take my fingers to mine.

Char. And though I've seen a much prettier mouth than she has, yet she keeps her teeth so white, that it's always worth while to make her laugh, if only to get a look at them.

Nan. I don't know whether you'd find it worth while to make me laugh, for I've never thought of my teeth, but I know they're good 'uns, if it's only by the crusts I can bite and the nuts I crack, sometimes hard as marbles.

Char. Then her hands are always clean?

Nan. Oh, dear! I've been throwing stones, mine can't be very clean.

(*Hiding her hands under her pin fore.*)

Char. And she's so clever with her needle, and wears such pretty caps, and all of her own making!

Nan. Clever with her needle! I once learnt to gobblestitch.

Char. When I walk out with her on a Sunday she looks so fresh and nice with her neat little shoes, and her white cotton stockings, and her smart little straw bonnet with cherry-coloured ribands, that I feel quite proud of her.

Nan. You wouldn't like to walk out with me on a Sunday!

Char. Not as you are now.

Nan. And that's pretty well as I always am—though I've got a cap and a bonnet, but I never think of putting 'em on. Well, and this young lady——

Char. Writes and reads. I once read a beautiful letter she sent.

Nan. To you.

Char. Yes.

Nan. Then you like her very much?

Char. I'm very fond of her.

Nan. Are you? (*Thoughtfully.*)

Char. Indeed, I am; well, good-bye, for a few minutes. I'm coming again presently. Good-bye; won't you shake hands?

Nan. No, I don't like to now, because my hands are not at all like that young lady's.

Char. Very well, I shall see you again in a few minutes. Good-bye. [*Exit*, D. F.

Nan. Good-bye. A pretty cap, and white stockings, neat little shoes, straw bonnet and ribands, and clean hands, and a walk out of a Sunday, I never thought of being anything like that, but I never tried. He said he admires her, is very fond of her. I don't think anybody will ever admire me, and I begin to fancy I don't admire myself much. I feel so unhappy! Because Charley has always spoken very kindly to me, has given me apples, and has often taken my part when everybody's been speaking against me, and so I don't like to hear him say he admires anybody; no, it makes my heart feel all at once like a lump o' lead. Oh! and such spiteful thoughts seem coming over me that I think if I knew who this young lady was I could snatch her cap off her head and eat it.

A knock at the door—Nan opens it—a LIVERY SERVANT *appears.*

Servant. Are the people of the house at home?

Nan. No.

Servant. When will they be in?

Nan. Soon.

Servant. Here's a letter for them. Take care of it, it's particular.

(*He hands Nan a letter, and disappears. She closes the door.*

Nan. I wish I could read what's on this! I never felt to care about reading before. I couldn't write a beautiful letter to anybody if I was to try ever so. I hate letters! (*Pulling open table drawer.*) There! (*Throwing the letter into the drawer.*) And there! (*Shutting the drawer up violent y.*) I wish I had twopence—I'd run away.

(*Sits on a stool* L. *of table, in thought.*)

Enter TOM, D.F. *from* L.

Tom. Hallo, Nan! what's the matter?

Nan. Nothing; I was only thinking.

Tom. That's something new for you! Confound it! I can't get the money to pay this rent anywhere. I've often befriended people when I had the means, and I thought I might get help in return when I wanted it; but nobody seems to have nothing now—everybody's very short—have just paid this, and just paid that, and very sorry, and that's all. (*He sits in a chair*, R. C.—*Nan rises and goes to him,*)

Nan. What are *you* thinking of?

Tom. Nothing that you can understand.

Nan. Well, then, you ought to make me! I don't like always feeling that I'm no use to anybody and good for nothing. Something vexes you, I know, and you ought to tell me what it *is;* and if I can't make it out at once I *shall* soon, if you try—I ain't a fool.

Tom. I will, then. We can't pay the rent—you know what that is—and somebody's coming here to take away everything to pay it!

Nan. What! take away this table, and that stool, and——

Tom. Don't you hear? Everything! And then turn us out, with no place to go to.

Nan. Turn us out? Into the streets, where I am always playing?

Tom. Yes.

Nan. Oh! I never thought there was anything

like that to come. I only knew here was a house, and there was this, and here was that, and there they'd be as long as ever we liked. And you've got no money?

Tom. No.

Nan. And that's what people call trouble, isn't it?

Tom. Yes, I should think it was!

Nan. Then why didn't you bring me up to be of use? Why didn't you put me in the way of doing something that might bring in a little? If it had been ever so little it would have helped, and then I should have felt proud and happy; and now I feel like a weed in a garden—fit for nothing but to be pulled up by the roots and thrown over the wall.

Tom. Hallo! Do you know who you're talking to? Do you know who I am? Now I don't want to speak above a whisper, or put myself at all out of the way, but I'll be hanged if you ain't talking to me as if you was bringing *me* up, as if I was *your* adopted child, as if you was *somebody* and I was *nobody*; and if it wasn't for fear the people next door might hear me, I'd speak out as I ought to do, and say I won't have it! (*Very loudly.*)

Enter HARRY, D. F.—*Comes down* L.

Harry. What's the matter now? Letting the steam off again? Always in a passion!

Tom. I was only quietly cutting down a young shrub that was growing too fast.

Harry. That's what you're always doing, and you'll cut away till there's nothing left—that will be the end of it.

Tom. Henry!

Harry. Now don't call me Henry; I don't like it, for I know when you call me so what line you want to work on. But I can tell you I'm now as much out of temper as you are, and if we both run on the same rail I shall clap on the thimble—yes, and then there'll be a smash!

Tom. Henry!

Harry. I tell you I'm in trouble—we're both in trouble, and as we not only can't help one another, but can't agree, the best way will be to part!

Tom. Henry!

Harry. I won't be called Henry! (*Crosses to* R.)

Tom. It's your name, Henry, and when I speak in that fashion, it's only to show you how genteel and mild I can be if I like. Henry, be quiet! I want to talk to you like a father. You have named parting! Very well! As we shall neither of us have a roof over our heads very soon, I think it's the wisest thing to do. All that remains to be settled is, what's to become of Nan? There! haven't I spoken gently?—haven't I kept my temper?

(*Crosses to* L.)

Harry. (R.) Nan, we are going to part company. Who will you live with?

Tom. Or, in other words, which do you love best?

Nan. (C., *to Harry sitting on table.*) When you are finishing what you say, I love *you* best, and I love *you* best—(*to Tom*)—when you're *beginning* to speak; but at all times I love you both dearly, and though I am but a poor girl who has been taught nothing, yet I *do* think when those who have always been together, and who have loved one another, get into trouble, that's the very time they ought to stand *by* one another! Yes, and to begin *then* to talk about parting is cowardly; yes, and you may be angry with me for what I've said if you like, but I couldn't help it! It was all here—(*touching her head*)—and now it's all there!

(*Pointing to Tom and Harry.*)

Tom. Henry! (*Sobbing, crosses to* R. C.)

Harry. Thomas! (*Sobbing.*)

Tom. Let us go and take a quiet walk round the garden, and talk the matter over. (*Crossing to* R. H.) It's the best way. We have been very good friends, haven't we, Harry?

Harry. Yes!—(*affected*)—very!

Tom. Now don't fly out again. And we have liked one another very much; and I think what Nan has said is very right, and it gives me a notion she knows more than you and I put together. Now stop you here for a few minutes; now let's see what can be done for the best. I shouldn't like to *part* with you, Harry.

Harry. I shouldn't like to part with *you.* Such friends and companions, Tom.

Tom. After so many years' acquaintance.

Harry. Fighting one another's battles.

Tom. Ah!

Harry. Ah!

Tom. Come along, Harry.

(*They go off arm in arm, and very affectionately,* R. H. 1 E.

Nan. Good fellows, both of 'em. Oh how I wish I could do something to help; something good for them. Can't I set about and see what's to be done, and do it? Yes, there's the money in the box; they have saved it for me, and they won't touch it because it's mine. *Mine*—well if it's mine haven't I a right to do what I like with it? No harm to take my own—should think not indeed. (*She goes to the cupboard on the* R. H., *takes out a money box, and shakes it.*) There's plenty here; and if they'll take this for the rent they shall have it, and that will be *one* trouble got over. Well, that's the way to get rid of 'em—one down and the one come on; and if one keeps on doing so, and don't flinch, what bushels of trouble may be clear'd away in time. Stop I don't like now to go out as I am. If Charley was to meet me he wouldn't feel proud of knowing me. Oh! there's my new bonnet and cap! (*Runs to the cupboard and brings out a bandbox—she opens it.*) Here's the bonnet. Oh! and with a cherry-coloured riband on it. Well that *is* prime, here's the cap, and here's an apron, and one of Tom's pocket-handkerchiefs, all clean and nice. (*She brings forward the looking-glass, and places it against the bandbox on the table, then looks at herself in it.*) Well, I never could have looked in the glass before, not to take any notice. I don't look at all like a young lady. I'll try and alter myself a little; I can but try. (*She goes to the bench at the back, pours some water into a basin, takes off pinafore, and with the large piece of yellow soap washes her hands.*) No wonder Charley wouldn't like to walk out with me—my hands look very well now. (*Dries them with the towel lying across the chair, then wipes her face.*) There! now for my hair! (*Takes up a shoebrush and comb.*) I don't think this is a right brush; it's what they clean the shoes with, but it will be better than none. (*Brushes her hair at the glass.*) Now for the comb! (*Parts her hair, and places it in bands.*) There! that's better—oh, much better! Now for the cap! (*Puts it on.*) Oh, that's better still! What am I to do with these rags in my frock? Stop, here's a pin, I can pin that up. Oh, and the apron

will hide all—that's capital! (*Ties on the apron.*) Nobody can see anything now. Now for Tom's handkerchief! (*Puts the handkerchief over her shoulders.*) There! *and* my bonnet. (*Puts on the bonnet.*) Oh! I wish Charley could see me now. Oh! how nice I do feel! I haven't very white cotton stockings, and my shoes are not very neat—I'll alter them as soon as I can. Now for my money-box. (*Puts it under her arm.*) If I meet any boys I shall only just nod to them, and I mean to walk quite in a different way to what I did; and if I do but meet Charley, I think he'll say there are more young ladies than one in the world

(*She walks very primly round the stage, and goes off,* D. F. TOM *and* HARRY *return,* R. H. 1 E.

Tom. Now it's all settled. You say you are sure to be locked up?

Harry. If I can't get five pounds by three o'clock!

Tom. And we are sure to be turned adrift here, so I say let everything go, let 'em clear everything off, and if you are in prison I'll work day and night to get you free again, and take care of Nan at the same time.

Harry. Anything you think best, Tom.

Tom. It's the only way Harry. There, give me your hand, my boy; we're friends again, and will stick to one another as long as we've breath in our bodies. (*They shake hands warmly.*)

Enter CHARLEY, D. F.

Char. (*Comes down,* C.) Ah! that's right; when friends are in trouble that's what ought to be. Now, I tell you what I've been thinking of; you had better come to my house to-day to be out of the way of all this bother, and bring Nan with you. Where is she?

Tom. (*Calling,* L.) Nan!

Harry. (*Calling.*) Nan! (*Goes up and comes down,* R C.) Not at home! Out again, as usual; in the streets or in the river, it's all one to her. I know she *fell* in the river the other day, though she wouldn't own it!

Char. Because you didn't go the right way to get the truth *out* of her!

Tom. Nan! Upon my soul if that girl isn't enough to drive anybody crazy. I never meant to work myself into a rage again, but this running out into the streets at such a time, too—Nan!

(*Calling out loudly.*)

NAN *re-appears,* D.F.

Nan. Here I am!

(*She walks down the stage in the same way she went off, and stands between Tom and Charley.*)

Tom. Hollo! who are you?

Harry. Nan!

Char. Why, Nan, this is a change for the better!

Nan. I thought you'd say so, and there'll be a greater change still presently, Charley; somebody else can wear a cap and a bonnet with a cherry-coloured riband, ah!

Tom. Where have you been?

Nan. To pay the rent!

Tom and Harry. What?

Nan. Look at this piece of paper. You can't read it. (*To Tom.*) Look at it, Harry!

Harry. (*Taking the paper.*) A receipt in full!

Tom. Why, Nan, what is the meaning of all this? Stop, let me speak, because I know how! Now, I ask you in the quietest, in the most gentle manner possible—where the devil did you get the money?

Nan. (C.) Got it from myself. (*Showing the money-box.*) Look, it's empty now, but there was more than enough, and I've something left besides, and I've got it in my pocket, and I mean to buy a nice white pair of stockings and neat shoes with it. (*Looking at Charley.*)

Harry. What business had you to take the money we saved?

Tom. Let *me* speak. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Nan, or to frighten you, but in taking what was in that box without asking, without at all saying anything to either of us, I can only tell you you've been and gone and committed bigamy!

Harry. (R. C., *Loudly*) Burglary!

Tom. (L.) It's all the same!

Nan. And that's something wrong, isn't it? I didn't mean to do that, that I didn't. (*Sobbing.*) You've often said it was all for me, and so I thought it was mine, and I could do as I liked. If I had spent it in anything, or given it away, that would have been wrong, I know, but to get you out of trouble I thought was right!

Char. And it *was* right, Nan—your own good and generous heart *told* you it was right—and the heart, if you have one, never tells you wrong, Nan; and if your two fathers can't *see* it was right, all I can say of them is, that they're a couple of fools!

Tom. Well, I think it was *good* of her, after all; not like as if she had spent it on horse i—it was for us, you know, Harry, and—and I think I've got a fly in my eye! (*Sobbing.*)

Harry. And I've got another! (*Sobbing.*)

Tom. (*Wiping Nan's eyes.*) Don't you cry, Nan. It's all right, only I almost wish we had got Harry out of *his* trouble first.

Nan. I've got some left—here it is. (*Feeling in her pocket and producing some silver.*) One, two, three, four, five shillings!

Tom. It's five pounds Harry wants!

Nan. And that's a great deal *more*, isn't it? Stop, I'll put all this away safely—it will help, and every little does that, you know. I've broken the bank, so I'll put the money in the table drawer—(*opening the table drawer*)—and then we'll set our heads together and see what can be done for the *next* trouble. Oh, here's a letter for one of you!—it was left here for the people of the house.

(*Taking out the letter she had placed in the drawer, which she gives to Harry.*)

Tom. More trouble, I suppose.

Harry. My execution, perhaps. (*Opening the letter.*) Eh? hollo! A five pound note!

Tom. A what?

Harry. A five pound note!

Tom. Lord! (*Takes it.*)

Harry. Stop, let me read! (*Reads.*) "The enclosed is for a young girl residing with you, whom the donors have been unable to trace out till to-day. It is a trifling reward for her presence of mind and courage. A servant will call in the evening to take her to those who will befriend her through life."

Tom. Does that mean you, Nan?

Char. Of course it does—I've heard of it. Tell 'em all about it.

Nan. I will. I didn't like before, but I will now. But *do* let me look at the money! (*Tom gives her the note.*) And is this five pounds? Oh my! Mine, really mine! and given to me? Oh! ha, ha!—I am so happy!

Tom. What have you done?

Nan. I was playing on the towing-path of the river last Tuesday——

Harry. The day you came home wet through, you naughty girl!

Nan. Yes; and there was a young woman there had put a child down on the bank to run about by itself, while she talked to—oh, such a tall soldier! Well, it was high tide, and the little thing went to pluck some grass on the brink of the river, when she fell in! The young woman screamed, and fainted away; and I screamed, and jumped in; and I was almost up to here!—(*putting her hand under her chin*)—but I held fast by a log with one hand, and managed to get tight hold of the child by the other, and I scrambled out, and the child was safe, and I gave it to the young woman, and some people saw me; but I was so frightened that I took to my heels and ran away, and that's how I came home all wet; but I wouldn't tell how it happened, for I thought I should be scolded, or never let go out again. And this is what I've got for it! And here—here, dear Harry! take it, and get out of *your* trouble as soon as ever you can.

(*Gives the note to Harry.*)

Harry. Oh, Nan!

Tom. Oh, Nan!

Char. Oh, Nan!

Nan. Oh, I'm so happy! Ha, ha! I'm good for something at last, ain't I?

Tom. Well, I don't want to be violent—I don't want to speak only in the gentlest way in the world—but I will say, after all, you're a regular out-and-out good girl, and I'm only sorry I ain't your natural born father, and I'd say a great deal more, only I—I—(*affected* —I feel I can't.

Harry. (*Affected*) No more can I, except she is a good girl.

Char. (*Also affected.*) Didn't I always say she was?

Nan. (*Affected.*) I—I know you did, Charley!

Tom. Here we are, all snivelling again! Never mind, it will do us good—the ground's all the better for rain now and then, and brings what's good out of it. Now, Nan, I must give you a kiss! (*Kisses Nan.*)

Harry. And me! (*Kisses her.*)

Char. (*Crosses to her.*) And me.

Nan. No! What would the young lady say that you admire so?

Char. Say?—that she admired *you*—and would kiss you heartily herself; for she is also good and generous, and though she's my sister——

Nan. Your sister? Oh, Charley!

Char. Yes; and I've set her up in business, and she's a dressmaker; and she shall teach *you* the business in the day, and I'll teach you reading in the evening.

Nan. Will you? Then there'll be one thing you *needn't* teach me, and that will be how to love you dearly.

Tom. Hollo! hollo! I don't want to say much, but I think you might ask leave, 'specially if you are going to love anybody better than us, who have taken so much care of you.

Char. But suppose in proper time she should give *me* the right to take care of her, and for life?

Tom. What! Be your wife?

Char. Yes.

Tom. Then I can only say—and in the mildest manner possible—that she'll make a good 'un!

Char. And I think you *will* give me that right, Nan.

Nan. I'm afraid I shall have to be changed a great deal more before *that* can happen, but I'll do my best to *deserve* every good that can come to me. I can't say any more than that, and though I feel at one time I was indeed, Good for Nothing; yet if you—(*to the Audience*)—will only go about and tell people that at last I *am* good for something, why——

Tom. Let me speak. (*To the Audience.*) I wish to talk to you like a father. Come here, Nan. (*Leading her forward.*) Good for something? Of course—everybody's good for something if taken care of. Many of our choicest flowers were wild once; and when Nature does so much, I maintain we ought to help Nature whenever we can, and do as much in return. We've found out Nature's done something for Nan, and so we are going to do something now to help Nature, ain't we, Nan? Of course. Therefore I say, quietly and calmly, if you think with me, and will help us by your approval of what we've done, and see there's a little truth in it, then neither that, nor Harry, nor Charley, nor Nan here, nor me, nor anyone present at this moment, can by any possibility *be* "Good for Nothing!"

CURTAIN.

HARRY. NAN. TOM. CHARLEY.

COSTUME.

TOM DIBBLES.—Linen check jacket; green striped double-breasted waistcoat; corduroy trousers; an old black hat; thick bluchers.

HARRY COLLIER.—Pilot coat, over a corded jacket, waistcoat, and trousers; black hair and whiskers; fur cap; wellington boots.

CHARLEY.—Neat working carpenter's jacket, apron, and trousers; brown paper cap.

YOUNG MR. SIMPSON.—*First dress:* Fashionable coloured coat; white hat; trousers, &c. A double dress, the fac-simile of the first; the coat split up the back, and covered with dirt.

NAN.—*First dress:* Dark-coloured cotton frock; pinafore; flaxen hair, quite rough, and straight across the forehead; laced boots; white stockings. *Second dress:* The pinafore taken off; the hair nicely combed and parted; little straw bonnet with cherry-coloured ribands.

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